

Inside ICE

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New York Mosque Leader Convicted In Visa Fraud Scheme

ICE Uncovers Elaborate Scheme To Exploit Religious Worker Visas

The ringleader of a massive visa fraud scheme operating out of a mosque he established in a Brooklyn basement was convicted by a New York court on September 23—the result of a three-year investigation led by ICE.

Muhammad Khalil was convicted on charges of conspiring to submit hundreds of false applications on behalf of illegal aliens from the Middle East, exploiting a program that provides specialized visas for foreign workers with religious training to work with religious organizations in the United States.

Khalil was the Imam—an Islamic religious teacher—and director of the Dar Ehya Essunnah mosque, which was located in the basement of a variety and greeting card store he owned in Brooklyn.

Since 1993, Khalil sponsored over 200 fraudulent applications for individuals seeking religious work visas to enter the United States, charging cash fees ranging from \$5,000 to \$8,000. Prosecutors claimed that he had netted



Muhammad Khalil was convicted September 23 for his role in a visa fraud scheme in New York.

more than \$600,000 from the scheme.

Prosecutors alleged also that Khalil is an admirer of Osama bin Laden and his jihadist philosophy. While Khalil has not been linked to specific terrorist activities, prosecutors pointed to a taped conversation in which Khalil reportedly praised bin Laden and called for Muslims to "arm themselves" for "another attack."

"None of these aliens were religious scholars, but instead were simply seeking entry into the United States under false pretenses," said Martin Ficke, ICE Special Agent-in-Charge for New York. "Today, Khalil's international smuggling pipeline has been shut down and a potentially serious vulnerability to our homeland has been closed."

In addition, Khalil issued bogus paychecks to the applicants and requiring them to return the money to him in cash. He then filed tax returns for the mosque and required the applicants to file personal tax returns stating that they were employed as religious workers at the mosque. This allowed him to portray the mosque as a large-scale entity with a growing congregation.

He was also convicted of making false statements to ICE agents investigating the matter and conspiring to obtain false Social Security cards.

Khalil's mosque shut down shortly after his arrest in February 2003. Charges are pending against his son, Asim Khalil, for his alleged role in the scheme.

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At Six Months, Arizona Border Control Initiative Marks Successes

DHS To Extend Multi-Agency Program Into Fall

Six months after its launch, a multi-agency border enforcement initiative is showing sure and steady progress toward its goal of stemming illegal immigration into the Southwest United States, Asa Hutchinson, DHS Under Secretary for Border and Transportation Security (BTS), announced in Tucson, Ariz., on September 21.

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"While we recognize and applaud the efforts of the government of Mexico to stem the flow of illegal immigration and to protect lives in border areas, we must strengthen the rule of law in the Sonoran Desert," Under Secretary Hutchinson said. "BTS initiatives are impairing the ability of smuggling organizations to operate, saving many lives and restoring control to the Arizona border."

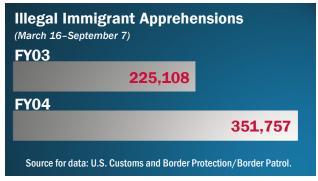
ICE is one of several DHS components contributing its expertise and assets to the ABC Initiative in the effort to shut off the flow

of illegal immigration into the Southwest United States at what has emerged as one of the most vulnerable points in the border.

Under Secretary
Hutchinson pointed to the apprehensions of more than 351,700 illegal immigrants at the Arizona border since March as evidence of progress at checking illegal border crossings. In the comparable period in 2003, illegal immigrant apprehensions in the same area totaled 225,108—an increase of over 56 percent.

Similarly, prosecutions of human smuggling organizations, another key indicator, have increased by 68 percent over the same period in 2003, and migrant desert rescues have more than doubled to 697. Additionally, narcotics seizures have more than doubled from 165,000 lbs. in 2003 to more than 359,000 lbs. during the same period in 2004.

ICE plays several key roles in the ABC Initiative,



DHS Under Secretary Asa Hutchinson pointed last week to sizable increases in apprehensions at the Southwestern border under the Arizona Border Control initiative launched in March.

working with other DHS agencies and other local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to provide a united front in the battle against human smuggling and illegal immigration. ICE's Air and Marine Operations Division, for instance, contributes to surveillance and interdiction efforts at the border

The ABC initiative dovetails with ICE's "Operation ICE Storm," a comprehensive operation launched in fall 2003 to combat violent smugglers and human trafficking gangs in the Phoenix area.

Over the last year, ICE has added 19 additional permanent agents in Phoenix to combat human smuggling and trafficking networks and offered additional training to agents on the ground to more effectively meet these criminal threats.

Inside ICE is an e-newsletter produced by the ICE Office of Public Affairs to inform the public about the mission, operations and activities of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Please send comments and contributions to: Russ.Bergeron@dhs.gov

Russ Bergeron, Editor

'A Time For Reflection': Ridge Marks 9/11 Anniversary At ICE HQ

In an age when terrorists are willing to target schoolchildren in Russia, turn airplanes into missiles and recruit youths to serve as suicide bombers, a constructive approach to homeland security requires teamwork and unity, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary

PUBLIC SECURITY Tom Ridge told ICE employees on September 10.

"We know what we're up against," Secretary Ridge said. "But we all know that in terms of our resolution to prevail, our ability to prevail and our willingness to do whatever we can in order to defeat these people and their ruthless evil ideology, we are prepared to do it by working together."

Speaking at ICE Headquarters in Washington, D.C., on the eve of the third anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Secretary Ridge invoked the memory of the terrorist attacks as a reminder of the importance of the homeland security mission. He also urged the ICE team to view the

anniversary as "a time for reflection" and renewed resolve.

"There are memories of that day that will be part of us forever," Secretary Ridge said. "The most important thing we can do is make sure that kind of occurrence never happens again on our soil."

Ridge also noted that, although the agency

has faced great challenges in reorganizing to meet its new mission and responsibilities, ICE's employees have made "an extraordinary effort" to meet those challenges. He offered high praise for ICE's achievements in its first 18 months of existence

Secretary Ridge was introduced by Assistant Secretary Michael J. Garcia, who recalled the story of United Flight 93, which crashed



Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge (above right) speaks with ICE employees after offering remarks on the 9/11 anniversary at ICE Headquarters in Washington, D.C., on September 10.

into a Pennsylvania field on 9/11 after unarmed passengers fought the terrorist hijackers to take control of the plane. Mr. Garcia noted that the Flight 93 passengers' sacrifice was the first of many of the nation's responses in the War on Terrorism.

"We are part of that ongoing response to September 11," Mr. Garcia noted in his opening remarks. "We here at Homeland Security have that legacy, that responsibility and that honor."

Chinese Brothers Indicted In Human Smuggling Scheme

A foiled scheme to smuggle Chinese migrants into the United States in a large shipping container led to charges being handed down September 10 against the two brothers who masterminded the plot.

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Yau-Hang Chan and his younger brother Yau-Hung Chan were indicted in Los Angeles for their part in a human smuggling plot disrupted by ICE in February, when agents acting on a tip opened a hard-topped shipping container at the Los Angeles port. Inside, they discovered 17 Chinese migrants—the human pawns in a dangerous smuggling game.

The smugglees came from China's Fujian province and told ICE agents that they were being charged roughly \$40,000 each for their illicit passage. The shipping container that served as their mode of transport was supplied with food and water and rigged with several car

batteries that were used to power small portable fans, along with a small, crudely fashioned ventilation hatch that had been cut into the container's floor.

The Chan brothers, both from Hong Kong, stand accused of orchestrating the smuggling scheme, obtaining the shipping container and recruiting the migrants to be smuggled. They were indicted for conspiracy to bring aliens into the country illegally and doing so for financial gain.





A foiled scheme to smuggle Chinese migrants into the United States in the shipping container pictured above led to charges against the scheme's masterminds on September 10.

ICE And Partners Crack International Ecstasy Smuggling Ring

Undercover law enforcement efforts targeting an international drug ring that allegedly imported millions of doses of the club drug Ecstasy into the United States has resulted in the arrest of 13 conspirators in recent weeks.

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Authorities in Los Angeles announced on September 16 that five defendants had been arrested in the investigation, which also netted the seizure of approximately 160,000 tablets of Ecstasy.

The law enforcement effort is a joint international operation that includes ICE, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Santa Monica Police Department, Austrian and Czech authorities, and other agencies.

"These criminals trafficked Ecstasy and laundered their profits through
bank fraud and real estate
transactions," said
Michael J. Garcia,
Assistant Secretary for
ICE. "This investigation
demonstrates the global
reach of federal law
enforcement to take drugs
off the street and seize the
profits from these criminal networks."



ICE agents participated in a multi-agency operation to dismantle an international drug smuggling and money laundering conspiracy that allegedly smuggled millions of doses of Ecstasy into the United States.

The five arrests last week, along with eight other arrests in recent weeks, cap a two-year investigation known as "Operation Money Man" that was conducted by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF). The OCDETF includes agents from ICE and DEA, as well as investigators from the Santa Monica Police Department.

The individuals arrested are accused of being part of an international coalition that trafficked in Ecstasy and laundering the monetary profits of the illegal trade through various loan fraud and real estate transactions. The alleged head of the organization, Eliyahu Marciano, was arrested by ICE and DEA agents in June and is currently being held without bail.

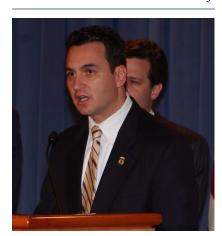
Two In Florida Charged In Terrorism Support Case

A Florida grand jury indicted two men this week on charges of providing material support for overseas terrorist activities, federal authorities announced September 16.

Adham Amin Hassoun, a.k.a. "Abu Sayyaf," and Mohammed Hesham Youssef, a.k.a. "Abu Turab," were charged for their roles in an ongoing scheme to recruit and raise money for jihadist conflicts overseas.

The indictment stems from a Joint Terrorism Task Force investigation that began after Hassoun was arrested on immigration charges in 2002 for violating the terms of his student visa.

"This indictment demonstrates what can be



Assistant Secretary Michael J. Garcia speaks September 16 at a press conference announcing the indictment of two terrorism support suspects in Florida.

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achieved when law enforcement agencies combine their unique authorities into a unified campaign against terrorism," said Assistant Secretary Michael Garcia at a press conference announcing the indictments. "ICE and the Department of Homeland Security are proud to have contributed their immigration expertise and resources to this Joint Terrorism Task Force investigation."

The indictment alleges that over several years beginning in 1994, Hassoun, a Palestinian national living in Florida, allegedly wrote checks to co-conspirators and organizations in support of the jihadist terrorist

agenda. Included among the recipients of Hassoun's largesse, the indictment says, are the Holy Land Foundation and the Global Relief Foundation organizations with alleged ties to terrorist financing.

Arrests Under Operation Predator Top 4,000

Arrests of child sex offenders and other sexual predators last week passed the 4,000 mark, Assistant Secretary Michael J. Garcia announced on September 17.

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Since the operation was launched in July 2003, ICE agents have arrested more than 4,045 individuals.

Of this number, more than 1,500 have been foreign national sexual predators whom ICE has removed; thousands more face immigration or criminal proceedings. Other offenders apprehended under Operation Predator include international child sex tourists, human traffickers and producers and consumers of child pornography.

"These 4,000 Operation Predator arrests are an outstanding achievement, but they're also a sobering statistic," said Mr. Garcia. "We have taken 4.000 of the worst criminals off the street, but we also realize how much more work we have to do. Child sex predators can come from all walks of life and we know from the arrests we have made that they can occupy positions of trust in the community—as doctors, as teachers, as youth leaders, as ministers and clergy. That makes the work we are doing under Operation Predator all the more urgent."

Also this week, authorities in Switzerland, acting on information provided by ICE, executed 400 search warrants, examined more than 100,000 photo and video files and arrested at least 10 individuals in a major operation targeting child pornography. Eight of the ten arrested are also suspected of child molestation.



In just over one year, ICE leads from Operation Predator have led to more than 760 arrests of child sex predators in countries around the world.

The Swiss enforcement action grew out of an ongoing probe into an Internet billing company in Belarus charged with money laundering and providing credit card billing services for 50 child pornography Web

sites worldwide, as well as operating child porn Web sites of its own. Nearly 900 individuals have been arrested worldwide in this investigation.

FPS Hazmat Team Responds To Louisville Meth Lab Inferno

An ICE Federal Protective Service (FPS) hazardous materials team sprang into action to assist local police in response to a September 9 explosion at a suspected methamphetamine lab in Louisville, Ky.

On the afternoon of September 9, a fire broke out in a Louisville home when an apparent meth lab in the garage exploded. Louisville fire and police units responded and contacted specialty units, including ICE's FPS hazmat team, to secure the residence.

Two men believed to have been involved in producing the highly addictive stimulant were hospitalized last week with severe

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burns and other injuries. They were to face charges of manufacturing methamphetamine and wanton endangerment when they were discharged from the hospital, according to local media reports.

Inside ICE

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The ICE mission is to secure the homeland by enforcing immigration and customs laws and by protecting U.S. commercial aviation and federal facilities.

"America's Most Wanted"



ICE Agent Jarrod Winkle (right) monitors tips from viewers on the "America's Most Wanted" hotline after an ICE fugitive was profiled on the show's season premiere episode on September 11.